

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY 20 WELLBEING TIPS

To help every teacher and every classroom participate in World Mental Health Day 2020, we have compiled a list of some simple wellbeing activities and tips – including ideas suggested by teachers across the UK.

Pick one from the list to do today, or run one a day in the week leading up to World Mental Health Day.

1 Create a sensory table or area in your classroom, whatever age group you teach. This can include tactile and visual elements like Play-Doh or slime, glitter glue, snow globes, small trays of sand or rice, etc. If a child is seeming overwhelmed, they can spend some time in the sensory area.

2 "At our school, each child has an individual calm box which contains things from both home and school. The calm box can include things like colouring books and pencils, fidget toys, Lego, stress balls – anything safe that the children enjoy." - **Sara, wellbeing lead, Cynon Valley, Wales**

Teacher tip

3 Ask the children to imagine a favourite place, how does it look? Smell? Feel? Ask them to draw a version of this happy place and keep it in their drawer to refer to if they need a break.

4 Take **brain breaks** throughout the day.

Teacher
tip

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“Have a mindfulness club as one of your extra-curricular clubs, or introduce a school-wide initiative of a 10-minute guided meditation session before lunch. You could also have an optional guided meditation session for staff at the end of staff meetings.” –

Gemma, primary school teacher, West Midlands, England

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Run a daily body check in – close your eyes and listen to your body and mind. How do you feel? Are you holding any tension anywhere? What emotions are you feeling today? Where in your body are you feeling it? You could follow this with a **guided relaxation activity**.

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Create a feelings display in the classroom or school for the children to refer to – each week learn about a new feelings word to expand the children's vocabulary for discussing their emotions.



Teacher
tip

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“We ask the children to list three things they are thankful for at the end of each day.”

– Cherie, primary school teacher, West Sussex, England

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Practice positive affirmations with the children every day, like: “I am brave, I am hard working, I am special.” Remind the children that we need to be kind to ourselves and tell ourselves how great we are. Start the day with an affirmation of your or the children's choice – they could even answer the register this way.

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Let staff complete PPA from home (if they want to) to ensure this is non-contact time.

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During break duty, hold a five-minute mindfulness walk around the school outside area. Ask the children to notice what they hear/smell/feel/see.

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At the start of the day, ask the children to hold in mind a positive intention for the day, for example: today I will be a good friend, I will persevere with my times tables, I will have fun at break time.

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Run a wellbeing drop-in activity during lunch times to support any children who are finding the playground overwhelming.

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“Due to the current restrictions our children have staggered starting times. To help them come in calmly and promote a happy, settled start to the day, I have a playlist of chilled music and a diffuser sending out relaxing essential oils! (It helps my classroom assistant and I have a positive start to our day, if nothing else!)” – **Sharon, primary school teacher, County Down, Northern Ireland**

Teacher tip

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Give each child a set of mindfulness colouring sheets to complete as they arrive in the mornings or as they return from break times. This will help them focus and give them a chance to unwind from the playground or morning drop off.

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Create a wellbeing board in the staffroom. This could feature information from teachers' mental health and wellbeing charity **Education Support**, as well as positive affirmations and ideas for relaxation techniques. Keep the board updated regularly.



Visit **Mentally Healthy Schools** for more resources

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Introduce a mental or wellbeing education slot at the start or end of your regular PE lesson, as an opportunity to discuss how the mind and body are connected and how we need both to be healthy. You could adapt a game such as **'Beans'** and incorporate feelings into the warm up or cool down with some yoga stretches and savasana.

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"One activity we often do with children if they're feeling worried about something is to get them to put the worry into an imaginary balloon, and then pop the balloon."

- **Rachel, primary school SENco, West Sussex, England**

Teacher tip

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Pair each staff member with a 'trusted colleague' and encourage them to have regular debrief sessions where they discuss how they are feeling at work. You could even introduce time in staff meetings for this.

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Tense and release – ask the children to close their eyes and sit in their chair. Starting with their feet ask them to tense their muscles for a few seconds then release, repeat this working up the body.